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ABSTRACT

In 1972-73 Grant Elementary School began the first year-round school in Utah. The program involves changes for teachers and students, and increases both in the number of school days and teachers' salaries. Each teacher has one-fourth more students than the average classroom in the community; each teacher has one-fourth more days (45) in which to teach those students, thereby giving the teacher no more than the community average number of students; and each teacher is paid one-fourth more salary for teaching the additional 45 days. The main difference between this plan and other year-round plans is in the flexible scheduling of students. Parents of Grant students have total, ongoing control of student attendance, deciding how the students are to fit their required 180 attendance days into the 225 school days available. (Students may, for example, attend school four days per week during the entire year, or they make take family vacations during the winter months.) After reporting on the success of the Grant program, this paper closes with a booklet on the plan, which discusses these topics: (1) the program's advantages for students, parents, tax-payers, and teachers; (2) circumstances that warrant consideration of a year-round schedule; and (3) four kinds of curriculum plans that allow for flexible attendance patterns. (IW)

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THE GRANT SCHOOL PLAN

GRANT ELEMENTARY

105 south 400 east

SPRINGVILLE, UTAH 84663

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Presented at the Annual Meeting of The National Council on Year-Round Education, Anaheim, CA, Feb. 2-5, 1986

Educational innovations are sometimes found where one would least expect them. Grant Elementary School in Springville, Utah would seem to be a prime example of conservative, semi-rural American. The town has a pioneer heritage with many families who remember the "good old days" of traditional schooling. Farms surround the community nestled at the foot of high mountains. Neat tree lined streets pass well kept homes. In the town is a nationally recognized art museum, and numerous churches. The economy for many years centered around a number of heavy construction companies having their origins in this small city.

The Grant School, located in the older portion of the town, used an old building constructed around 1900 until 1983 when that part of the school was torn down. A new wing was added to the old plant in the 1950's and finally in 1971 a modern addition was constructed. Looking at the school from the outside and knowing something of the community attitudes, one would expect to find just another traditional American school.

However, in 1973 under the leadership of Waldo Jacobson, the principal, the school year was extended to 225 days. At that time the money was generated to keep the school open through the differentiated staffing patterns made possible because of the broad financial base created by the large studentbody. When the school population dropped from 700 students to 400, because of the construction of a nearby school, the flexible financing possibilities were lost. Currently with the wide interest being shown for year-round school as an answer to over-crowding, the Grant School has ressurrected it's old plan with a different financial motivation.

Essentially the plan is as follows:

1. Each teacher has 25% more students than the average in other schools

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in the community in his/her classroom.

2. Each teacher has $\frac{1}{4}$ more time or 45 days in which to teach those students.

3. And each teacher is paid $\frac{1}{4}$ more salary.

The students' parents may choose which 180 of the 225 possible school days the children will attend. No attempt is made on the part of the school to dictate which students will attend specific days, although all students are encouraged to take off a day or two at a time throughout the September to May school year and for this time to be made up in the summer. For this reason, Grant teachers generally have no more students than the community average on any given day. The curriculum is designed in such a way that children are diagnosed and given an outcome--based educational plan to fit their individual needs. In other words, a child is not moved to the next concept until he masters the pre-requisite learning. It doesn't matter which day a child masters the concept, only that he is given the opportunity to learn it when he is ready.

Some of the advantages of this plan that the teachers have noted are the following:

1. Short vacations throughout the year do not hinder learning but rather seem to enhance it. The child comes back refreshed and seems to retain better that which he has just learned after taking only a few days off.

2. Spreading the long summer vacation period over the entire calendar year eliminates the need for extensive review at the beginning of the school year, and the re-teaching of study habits that have been unused during the traditional lengthy summer vacation. School time, at the beginning of each school year, can then be spent building and adding to learning rather than in lengthy reviews of past learnings.

3. Children tend to learn at an uneven pace, with their learning profiles reflecting peaks and valleys. Year-round plans take advantage of these natural learning growth spurts whenever they might occur, without risking the possibility

of losing such opportunities during a long vacation period.

4. Each child has the opportunity of attending a full 180 day school year which in itself allows for more learning than the traditional pattern where valuable learning time is necessarily lost because missed school days cannot be made up.

5. The students need not miss enriching family activities which might ordinarily conflict with school attendance.

6. When a child misses school he picks up where he left off upon returning.

7. Parents need never apologize for keeping their students out of school when their presense at home on a given day is needed.

Teachers who have been a part of the year-round plan have made the following observations:

1. Teacher burnout does not seem to be so much a result of long work periods, but as a response to stress. The year-round plan at Grant is a much more satisfying way to teach, and the teachers do not feel as much pressure as in a traditional plan.

2. Professionalism is enhanced because:

a. Teachers prefer to practice their profession, rather than seek menial jobs during the summer or moonlight during the school year.

b. A 1/4 higher salary makes a second job or moonlighting unnecessary for breadwinning teachers.

3. The feelings of success and achievement that teacher's have are directly related to the success rate of students. A recent school survey at Grant showed that students are happy in the program and perceive themselves as being successful.

The philosophy of the Grant School is that no child will be asked to do anything that is <u>too</u> difficult for him. Every child can be successful on <u>his</u> instructional level. Therefore, teachers must organize for instruction in such a way as to meet the individual needs of students.

The school is divided into four learning levels, which are made up of Kindergarten students, First Graders, seven and eight year olds or those who are in

Second and Third Grades, and a mixture of Fourth and Fifth Graders. Teachers within each learning level, or team, teach the same subjects at the same time. Students are grouped according to their specific academic needs in the basic subjects, such as in Math and Reading. Sometimes large group instruction occurs where the needs are the same for the entire group. More often a few students have the same need at the same time. When this occurs children will work together in a small group. Because the program includes continual checks to determine mastery, the grouping and re-grouping for instruction occurs frequently.

Special services provided for Chapter One and Resource students are usually integrated into the classroom as a part of the regular curriculum. The students involved are not generally aware of their special classification because all students are continually working with various teachers in different settings.

One vetern teacher who has taught for 25 years, and is now working as a coordinator for 2nd and 3rd grades is often heard to comment; I feel I know each of the 160 students I work with and their academic needs better than I did the 30 I used to teach in a self contained classroom. This comes from the philosophy of meeting the students' needs rather than covering the curriculum on a particular grade level and hoping the student learned what was presented. When you can't move on until a student masters a concept you pay close attention to finding the best way to help him.

Particular teacher strengths are used to an advantage with this type of team-teaching organization. Some teachers are musically talented and make music instruction much more enjoyable and informative than someone who may lack such skills. Such a teacher will teach music while another will teach art or some other specialty. Likewise units of social studies and science can be selectively chosen according to the teachers interests and skills in those areas without dissipating their energies in teaching all subjects of the curriculum. Physical education instruction emphasizes physical skills and fitness of students; with intramural team sports being organized

to practice those skills learned in the P.E. Classes. There seems to be no time during the school day for students to wonder what to do. Another task or activity is always waiting to be started as each one is finished.

The Grant School faculty believes that all children should feel successful in their school work regardless of whether or not they are working on grade level. All children should experience succe[illegible]d mastery at their individual ability levels. All students should be challenge[illegible]d encouraged to progress to the limits of their capabilities. Grant School ch[illegible]en are involved in a program called the Great Brain Project" which permits students to have an in-depth exploration experience on topics of their own interest which are then shared with other students and family members in a formal presentation. It is believed that children should be limited only by their own individual abilities and committment, not by a restrictive school curriculum geared to the group average.

Let's find out now how some of the students at the Grant School feel about their year-round program:

Marcia said: I like the extended year because it gave me something to do in the summer months.

Karen remarked that she was able to see her brothers team win the state championship in football and would be able to make the days up in the summer.

Branden said he attended 2-3 days a week last summer and started in the fall right where he left off.

Since the beginning of the project many parents have been involved in decisions made at the Grant School. A recent survey found that the patrons of the school favor a flexible year-round program over other year-round plans and also over the traditional school schedule. Here are some reasons why:

Mary Lou Jensen stated she liked knowing that her son could miss a day for illness and later make up the day with no penalties.

Beverly Bird said her son missed school to celebrate his birthday with his friends who also took time off. On another occasion when my son was sick and I couldn't be

there with him my older boy stayed home and took care of him.

In order to have any innovative educational idea become a reality, teachers must be supportive. Some of the teachers at the Grant School express their feelings this way:

Bonnie said that starting a school year after an extended year is much easier. Students haven't had a long forgetting period.

Bob said that during the summer I'm a program director for a Boy Scout camp. I don't want to give up this enjoyable summer job. One of the professional benefits that attracted me into education was the opportunity to have other summer experiences and to have a diversion and rejuvenation period. The flexability of the Grant School model allows me the option of not teaching through the extended year. I appreciate this model for it allows me the respect of keeping an occupation benefit that was important to me as a career choice.

Jan thinks it is exciting as a Kindergarten teacher to see the maturation of the students over a longer period of time. Many of my students make their best progress during the summer months. Before year round school that time was wasted.

As one can readily see the Grant Elementary School enjoys tremendous support from teachers, students, and parents alike. It is no wonder that the program has been so successful. Let's visit now with Dr. J. Wayne Nelson, Superintendent of schools in Nebo School District.

Superintendent Nelson said it is true that educational innovations are found where one would least suspect them. Grant Elementary School is a place where new ideas have become a reality.

APPENDIX: THE GRANT PLAN BROCHURE

THE GRANT PLAN

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WHAT is the Grant flexible scheduling plan?

In 1972-73 the Grant School began the first year-round school in the state of Utah. The present program evolved from that original plan. The concept involves the use of 1/4 more:

STUDENTS - Each teacher has 1/4 more students than the average in the community in his or her classroom.

DAYS - Each teacher has 1/4 more (45) days in which to teach those students. Therefore, on an average day the teacher has no more than the community average number of students.

SALARY - Each teacher is paid 1/4 more salary for teaching an additional 45 days.

The primary difference between the Grant School plan and other year-round plans is in the flexible scheduling of students. In contrast to a conventional year-round plan, parents at the Grant have total, on-going control of the student's attendance. In other words, each student has 225 days in which to fit his own 180-day schedule. An example of this might be a student who chooses to attend a 4-day week in order to save 36 days to make up in the summer.

WHY should a flexible year-round plan be considered?

What are the advantages for students?

The greatest advantage seems to be in greater learning opportunities for students. Several factors make this possible.

1. The potential for 100% attendance gives more learning opportunities.

2. Short vacations break up monotonous periods without impairing learning potential. Students tend to return refreshed rather than becoming "burned out."

3. The avoidance of long vacations makes review time negligible. Students are not generally away from school long enough to forget major concepts.

4. Students do not feel compelled to come to school when they are "a little sick" and, therefore, their days in school are more productive.

5. More outside-of-school educational opportunities can be taken.

The second advantage, convenience to the student, comes in several ways. It is nice to be able to take a day off for a wide variety of reasons such as:

1. A family may plan a vacation.
2. A child may stay home for even slight illnesses.
3. A parent may wish to spend time with just one child, alone.
4. A parent may want a child to work on some school work at home.
5. Certain school activities that parents may disapprove of (such as Halloween or a paticular field trip) may be avoided without missing a school day.
6. Doctors appointment, piano lessons, etc. can be planned during regular school hours.

What are the advantages for parents?

Many of the student advantages have their counterparts in producing more satisfied parents. Family scheduling of activities becomes less restrictive when children can be absent at the option of parents. The flexible plan does not conflict with other school schedules because parents have almost unlimited options.

What are the advantages for taxpayers?

Taxpayers seem most interested in saving tax dollars and getting the most benefit from each dollar spent. If year-round schools are in place, the need for school buildings is diminished. For every five schools on a conventional plan, only four would be needed on year-round schedules. Building maintenance costs are decreased when fewer buildings must be cared for. If teachers are hired to teach twelve months instead of nine, fewer teachers are needed and, therefore, there is a savings in teacher benefits(insurance,

etc.) Fewer administrators are needed when there are fewer schools.

Tax money is better spent when students learn more in school. Since year-round school is believed to be better education, all citizens benefit. A way to encourage good teachers to remain in the profession has always been a concern to the public. Many of the excellent teachers who leave the profession because the pay is inadequate would find the added 1/4 salary incentive enough to remain in the field.

What are the advantages for teachers?

When teachers are given the opportunity to work twelve months instead of nine, their salaries are increased by 1/4. This benefit is obvious. Some have wondered if teacher burnout necessitates a three-month unwinding period. The source of teachers' burnout is stress. When teachers feel more successful because they see their students accomplishing and enjoying school, they do not feel the need for as much time off.

The consensus of opinion among teachers at Grant is that a good year-round plan enhances the possibilities for quality education to the point of increasing student satisfaction and, therefore, teacher morale.

WHEN is it important to consider a flexible year-round program?

1. When schools become overcrowded and tax funds for education are scarce, the year-round program is a viable option. The concept need not be tied to a 225 (1/4 more) day school year. As a need arises, a school may move into an extended-year for any number of days up to the 225 mark. For example, if the school capacity is planned for 450 students and grows to 500, it is carrying 1/9 more students. If the school year is extended by 1/9 (20 days) and the students stay home 20 days during the year, the average class size is no more than intended. The teacher cost per student does not increase and there is a savings in building needs.

2. Some schools have chosen a year-round program because of the quality educational opportunities. Refer to the list of student advantages.

3. Some communities have special needs. The traditional school schedule evolved because of special community needs when the predominate occupation was farming. Parents at that time needed their children at home to help with the crops during summertime and harvest seasons. Our modern age has brought special community needs that vary. For example, a mountain community that has winter resorts might need students available in the winter for some jobs. An area with many construction companies that stop working in the winter may want students free for vacations when parents are not working. It would be feasible for job sharing among teenagers to allow for year-round employment. Most communities have need for student employment at times other than summers. Communities where there is a high rate of teenage crime might prefer year-round school so only 1/4 of the students are out of school at a time.

HOW can the curriculum be organized to allow for flexible attendance patterns?

There are various ways to organize for the days each child misses. It is most likely that a combination of approaches will be used depending upon such factors as (1) school organization for instruction, (2) teacher preferences, and (3) subject matter differences. Some of the possibilities are as follows:

Plan 1: Individualized, out-come based progression - students move on as they demonstrate mastery. Classes are ability-grouped in basic subjects so each teacher can plan for a more narrow range of abilities. Within that group, various levels can be taught in small group instruction or individual help given when needed. The curriculum materials must be organized sequentially with mastery tests given regularly. The children are regrouped on a daily basis according to needs. This type of organization is most effective when the following criteria are in place.

* A. Teamwork among teachers allows for flexible ability groupings.

* B. The curriculum is sequentially organized with readily available materials which can be quickly checked as the students are ready for evaluation.

*Essential

C. Small ability groupings within the large group (center-type organization) allow for more flexibility and availability of the teacher for instruction.

D. Additional aids within the classroom can be very helpful - foster grandparents, Title I, resource teachers, parent help, student help (peer or older student tutoring), community volunteers, etc.

Generally, this approach is most appropriate in the basic skills areas of math, spelling and reading. Learning in these areas is dependent upon pre-requisite learning and lends itself to individualized, outcome-based organizations.

Plan 2. Units can be organized in mastery steps with flexibility allowed for accomplishments.

For example: Several projects which teach various concepts can be explained at the beginning of the unit. Such variations as filmstrips and films, reading material, participating in discussions with the teacher, work sheet-type learning aids, creative projects to display learning, etc. can be presented as possibilities. A child may be required to choose a minimum amount to accomplish according to his/her number of days in attendance. In other words, if he attends all twenty days of a twenty-day unit he may need twenty activities; but he/she is only required to complete fifteen activities if he/she attends fifteen days.

Subjects such as science, social studies, and health lend themselves to this kind of structure. In an organization involving platoon teachings, each teacher may develop a unit to be re-taught as classes rotate through his/her room. The state core curriculum can be assigned so that each teacher is responsible for a group

of objectives. In this way, a teacher can spend time developing quality rather than quantity of methods and materials, and the students gain the benefit of more expertise in each area.

Plan 3. The weekly lessons may be taught on a four-day schedule for new materials, with the fifth day being review. Students who miss a day Monday through Friday receive the review for the week or special help from the teacher or other students on Friday. This works well if the students are asked to attend a regular four-day week. In this way, there is very little re-structuring of the curriculum or traditional methods of teaching. The same curriculum and methods the teacher has used in his traditional 180-day school year are simply spread to 225 days with an extra day each week allowed for make-up and review. Students who are absent for more than one day are in a situation that is no worse than the traditional structure. They may take extra work home to work on with parents and they still have more options for making up instruction and time off than under the traditional program.

If teachers will think of this plan in relationship to what must be done in a traditional classroom when students are absent, it becomes very understandable. Conventionally, when a student misses a day of school and the class has gone beyond him, the teacher must spend some time in "make-up" instruction. There is no time planned for this on a 180-day schedule. In a 225-day year the "make-up" time is allowed for, and students who miss school may "make-up" their days as well as the concepts to be learned. Teachers and students should then be able to avoid the natural frustration that comes in a conventional program when students are absent.

Plan 4. Some teachers for some subjects may want to expand the curriculum to include 225 days of new materials rather than only 180 days of concepts to be taught. A philosophy that in certain areas each skill does not have to build on the next one; or the steps are small enough that it is possible to miss some explanations and then "catch up"; or it is not essential for "everyone" to learn "everything" must be the basis for this kind of instruction. The curriculum is then expanded to cover more materials and each child is only expected to learn that to which he is exposed.

For example, instead of planning nine units of study for the year, the teacher would plan eleven units. Each child would then be held accountable for the portion of each unit which he was present to receive. The teacher or students would not feel the pressure to master material covered during an absence.

A school or class within a school might choose to use a combination of approaches during a typical school day. For example, Plan 1 might be used for math, spelling and part of reading. Plan 2 would be appropriate for social studies. Plan 4 might be used for science and health, P.E., art and music. Plan 3 might be used for some reacing and language arts activities.

It would be possible to use Plan 3 for the entire range of subjects if a teacher so desired. If a school is very traditional in organization, the faculty may feel inclined to maintain the status quo as much as possible while implementing a new attendance pattern. There is much that can be said in favor of avoiding too many changes at once.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

GRANT ELEMENTARY

105 South 400 East
Springville, Utah 84663
(801) 489-3608